

2 Feb 77
DDA 77-0610

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Administration

SUBJECT : DDS&T Comments on the MAG Report to the
DDCI on "Personnel Management" dated
7 December 1976

REFERENCE : Memo from DDA dated 4 Jan 77; Subject:
MAG Report to the DDCI on "Personnel
Management", dtd 7 Dec 1976

I have completed my review of the MAG Report and agree with many of its recommendations. Although I found a number of unverified generalizations and a lack of sophistication in its factual base, I acknowledge that its content reflects perceptions which we must recognize as valid. On the positive side I understand that the MAG charter is to advise the DDCI on matters of concern to the employees in the Agency. This is how these issues are perceived by the employee and not how the personnel and administrative specialists involved in personnel management may view them. The DDCI, whom the MAG was constituted to advise, wants a product which is accurate and well staffed out. He also needs a feel for how the Agency employee in the trenches views the system. I doubt that personnel surveys alone provide this type of insight. I think that views from the MAG perspective taken together with all the other pertinent considerations provide a starting point from which solutions for the good of the employee can be derived. Based on the MAG Report and similar papers originated by the DDS&T MAP, it is clear that the average employee does not have the same appreciation of the worth of the system as the professional specialists do. I realize that a great deal of effort has been made to minimize misunderstanding and ignorance of our personnel management policy but we must recognize that this effort has been less than totally effective. In the eyes of the employee problems do exist; and even though many of these concerns may be based on misperceptions or on valid questions with no practical solutions, management must always be alert for areas where improvement can be made.

Returning to the task at hand of commenting on the MAG paper I would like to provide the following comments keyed to the paragraphs of the MAG Report.

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2. I agree with the MAG position that employee dissatisfaction with the career development programs and procedures cannot be traced solely to unrealistic expectations. Although I feel the employee bulletin is an important tool in keeping employees informed alternate mediums might be explored to supplement the bulletin.

3. It would appear that the APP and PDP are not being utilized by Agency managers in any consistent fashion. I feel the PDP could be of real concern to the individual employee involved. DDS&T employees are encouraged to participate in formulating the PDP by expressing their own assignment and training goals to their office management by submitting career planning profile questionnaires. In addition I have encouraged all of our employees, particularly those at PDP level to discuss their career development goals with management and their career development officers.

4 and 5. I agree that the supervisor is an important part of the "career management machine" (along with the Career Boards and Panels) and should do more than evaluate performance. However, I question whether the press of day to day business would allow the supervisor to meaningfully discuss career development and training on a continuing and in-depth basis. I would suggest a schedule be set up that would insure each employee would receive formal counseling at least once every three years from a qualified career service representative.

6 and 7. The DDS&T has gone on record as supporting a well rounded rotational program not only to broaden and develop our employees but in the interest of improving our mission capabilities in such areas as technical research and development. However, the pervasive idea that large numbers of inter- and intra-directorate assignments are desired by employees and will help break down barriers between Agency components is not necessarily true based on our experience. Evidence indicates that often little attention is given to the problem

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of fitting rotated employees into useful roles in their new directorate. The mission of the Agency and our responsibility to keep the organization functioning smoothly must not be disregarded. I fully agree that rotational assignments are necessary and can be beneficial; but carried out on the scope which the MAG proposes, might be disruptive to the mission and the employee.

8 and 9. As I stated above the use of rotational assignments plays a valuable role in the DDS&T and helps to encourage a dynamic research and development program. However, I feel strongly that responsibility for the career management of these employees must remain with the parent career service. In my opinion, to create a "Rotatee Career Board" would further complicate our present system. I fail to see how such a board would possibly be in a better position than the parent career service to decide on promotions and reassignment of these personnel.

10. I assume this is a course to prepare the individual for his rotational assignment and agree with the MAG that the receiving directorate should be primarily responsible for the training.

11. I agree with the MAG that high potential individuals should be identified and tracked, and that the PDP is the mechanism for doing this, however contrary to the MAG position, it is my opinion that the PDP is being used and gaining acceptance in the Agency. Obviously to remain a viable program it needs continuing management support and interest behind it.

12. The MAG appears to be in favor of lengthening the probationary time period beyond the current one year in order to allow ample time to assess potential. It is my opinion that lengthening the probationary period will only increase the number of poor performance cases allowed to hang on year after year. Consequently my position would be to do everything in our power to reach a judgment within the one year allotted. (It is interesting to note the DDS&T MAP reached the same conclusion on 12 January 1977.)

13. I agree with the MAG position.

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14. I agree with the MAG that fitness report ratings are inflated largely due to the human factor. I also believe that the fitness reports being prepared today are more objective and supervisors have improved greatly in this area over the years. The fact that employees can review their personnel files has been widely broadcast and I see no problem in this area. As you are probably aware the DDS&T MAP suggested inclusion of comparative ranking indicators in the fitness report believing that this would force the supervisor to be more objective and honest with the employee and that the overall evaluation would be in better perspective. The Office of Personnel stated the ranking should not be included for fear the information could later adversely affect an employee. I believe the MAG recommendation merits further study but it should be carefully considered by management before implementation because of the very legitimate caution expressed by OP.

15. The idea is appealing but apparently is not feasible.

16. We must make every effort to ensure that our promotion system is selective and highly competitive. However, I find nothing wrong in placing an individual in a higher graded position than his present rank and delaying the promotion until he/she has demonstrated the ability to perform at the higher grade level.

17, 18 and 19. The Agency has a definite need for substantive and functional specialists and I was amazed that the MAG doesn't agree. Highly skilled scientists, analysts and operations officers perform valuable services which do not require managerial skills or the exercise of people-oriented responsibilities. Substantive excellence deserves promotion as well as managerial ability deserves it.

20. The MAG appears to be uninformed regarding the restraints and guidelines under which the Agency must operate in the area of position management. I do feel however that Office Directors should play a more direct role in determining position grade levels.

21. I am aware of the Management Committee decision to stay with the one-grade promotion system and support it. Experience indicates the Agency has never had a recruiting problem as a result of the one-grade promotion system.

Approved For Release 2005/07/26 : CIA-RDP82-00357R000200130008-2

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22. I do not agree with MAG's belief that QSI's are more difficult to award than promotions. The mechanism for awarding a QSI is simple and if an office is concerned and interested the process can work in a swift, efficient and productive manner.

23. As pointed out in the OP comments, present programs are already addressing the issue of monetary awards. However, it is incumbent upon management to ensure that maximum use is made of the monetary award when appropriate.

24. I agree with MAG that the policy on promotion time-in-grade guidelines needs further clarification and standardization by senior management. I am aware that disparity in practice exists within the DDS&T and probably in the other directorates. Ideally, when an employee has occupied a position long enough for management to judge that he can do the job satisfactorily then he should be considered for promotion. Time-in-grade guidelines can tend to obstruct this approach.

25. I agree with OP that efforts and methods to identify and hire minorities and women are getting progressively better and more productive. I recognize that there are components which need to be pushed, however, overall I think our results are improving and in some cases have been excellent. In my opinion the suggested MAG approach is not warranted.

26. I agree with OP's comments that grievance information is already available to employees from a number of sources. Issuance of a reminder, however, cannot hurt.

27. I believe the Agency already has the means to expedite the processing of minority applicants as well as non-minority applicants, and the system should be used when justified. The MAG proposal to employ minorities on unclassified projects pending final clearance is impractical from a dollar and cents point of view and is, in effect, reverse discrimination.

28. I agree with MAG's position but withhold complete endorsement until I learn what form the proposed assistance would take. FYI, the DDS&T is already making contact with potential applicants down to the high school level.

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29 and 30. I fully agree with the MAG position regarding hiring and retention of superior minority employees, and women's rights.

31. I agree that an employee might respond less readily to a supervisor's questions and that in certain cases it could be useful to use a neutral interviewer. Why couldn't there be a supervisor interview as well if for no other reason than to get the parties in communication with each other?

32. I agree with the MAG concept of advising EOD's about job opportunities in the Agency and planning for the future. Good training courses and orientation programs are essential. The DDS&T has an on-going orientation program for new employees.


33. I agree with the MAG with one exception. The current OTR approach is to provide clerical orientation instruction only after the employee has been with the Agency at least two months. A two-month breaking in period should make the new employee more receptive and retentive to the orientation. Basic office procedures, formats, etc. should be provided by the parent office immediately upon assignment.

34, 35 and 36. I generally agree with the MAG's observation that we should use and possibly improve upon the personnel management systems we now have (PDP, APP, etc.) while continuing to try new and different approaches to personnel assessment.

37. I find the idea of establishing a Personnel Policy Staff one which merits further study and would like to see this proposal explored further before discarding it as unworkable. Such a concept has potential pluses and minuses which should be identified and weighed against our current Office of Personnel organization and functions. In any case, we must have aggressive leadership in personnel management that will preserve the better features of our present personnel system and lead to the creation and implementation of innovative approaches.

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38. The DDS&T conducts a number of in-house courses and I am especially proud of our "Career Development Course" which has a proven track record as one of the Agency's finest. Overall I am satisfied with the current balance between directorate/component and OTR conducted training responsibilities. The MAG assumption that Agency in-house training is more or less expensive than that conducted externally is not supported nor is the sweeping suggestion that every OTR course could be shortened.


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